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THE PETERITE



• AUGUSTUS • JESSOPP •

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..OF..

PERCY J. S. RYAN,

NEW YORK CITY.

Date *April 1897*

• W . G . Johnston :

26 July 1915.

SIMON RYAN THE PETERITE.

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Simon Ryan

THE PETERITE

BY

REV. AUGUSTUS JESSOPP, D.D.

HON. CANON IN NORWICH CATHEDRAL

AUTHOR OF "STUDIES BY A RECLUSE," "TRIALS OF A  
COUNTRY PARSON," ETC.

NEW YORK  
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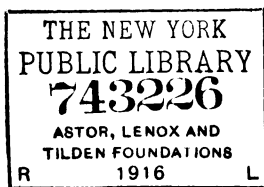


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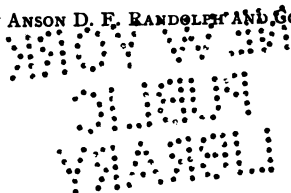
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## SIMON RYAN THE PETERITE.



IT is more than forty years ago since I first heard of Simon Ryan. I was a Freshman. I mean that I was in my first year at St. Boniface, and there were still stage-coaches on the road in those primitive times; at any rate, there was one which plied between Camford and Thrapston in Northamptonshire, and I found myself outside that coach one day, and occupying the box seat, with "old Topham" on the box. I quite forget where I was going, and I only remember two incidents on the journey. One was the sight of a tame fox in an innyard where we changed horses, and the other was old Top-



ham's conversation as we drove past a rather large coppice skirting the roadside for some distance. I think it was somewhere near Huntingdon. Mr. Topham had a grudge against that coppice; he had reason to complain of it. Tramps and thieves, he assured me, were wont to lurk there; and when the nights were dark and he had a light load of passengers, the rogues more than once had sneaked out of the wood and hung on behind the coach. Then they had contrived to get clear off with a hamper or other package for which some one was answerable; and when he got to the end of this journey, lo! there was something missing from the waybill. Mr. Topham expressed a strong wish that that coppice was his property; then he'd cut it down, every stick of it. "But that there Si Ryan, he — he's wrong in his head. He'd never cut down a tree to save himself

from the workhouse, and he ain't likely to come to that neither. If I was to ask him to cut down that copse he'd laugh at me! No! He wouldn't do that neither. He never does laugh: He's a Peterite!" I mused, and after a little while I asked timidly, "What is a Peterite, Topham?"

The old *jarvie* took his time to answer. "Bless you, sir, I don't know. They all say he's a Peterite, and he don't deny it. He ain't ashamed of it, anyhow. Maybe he ain't no cause to be ashamed of that."

It was dark by this time, and I have a distinct recollection of getting sleepy and of half dropping off, then of mechanically repeating to myself: "Si-Si-Si-Simon, Peter Ry-Ryan, Rite, Peterite!" After that Memory has no more that she can recall.

Seven or eight years later I found myself in temporary charge of the

parish of Carlton. I had come back to the University and was in residence for a time, but I officiated in the little church on Sunday and went over once during the week to visit the people. It was a very bitter winter and the snow was deep, and lasted for some weeks, I think; but I was young and enthusiastic, and the people took to me. I think they were rather complimented by being visited in the "coarse" weather; and as I went in and out among them cheerily, they showed their friendliness in many little ways which were pleasant and encouraging.

One day I said to the clerk, "Who lives in that house with the trees so thick round it? I've never been there yet. I must go." The clerk grinned from ear to ear. "That? Why, don't you know, sir? You must ha' heerd talk of Mas'r Ryan. He's a Peterite!" I had quite forgotten all about my

journey on the coach, or, rather, I had never thought any more of it; but as I heard the name, the old scene came back upon me with a curious vividness, and I found myself again repeating the old words, "Si-Si-Si-Simon, Peter Ry-Ryan, Rite, Peterite," in a dreamy whisper. "Aye! That's right!" said the clerk. "You've heerd tell of old Simon Ryan, I'll be bound." And he grinned again, broadly. I cannot explain why I felt irritated by the man's manner, but I was. I could not bring myself to ask any more questions. I passed out of the churchyard, trudged bravely through the deep snow, and made straight for "Mas'r Ryan's" without turning my head. The sun was setting. The clouds looked heavy and sullen; it was dusk when I knocked at the door. There was a light burning in the hall. For several minutes I waited and heard no sound. I knocked

again; for there was a brass knocker and no bell. Then there were foot-steps. The door opened, and I found myself confronted by a tall man whose face I could not see, for his back was towards the lamp on the hall table, which of course shone full on my face. He held the door wide open, in a frank, fearless way, paused a moment, and then, in a deep voice that betrayed no surprise nor any other emotion, he said inquiringly, "Your pleasure, sir?"

"I am in charge of this parish, sir, for some months," I answered, "and I think it right to pay my respects to all the parishioners, that I may, if I can, teach something to those who desire to learn, and, if I can, learn something of those who have anything to teach. May I come in, Mr. Ryan?"

Instinctively he drew back, and I crossed his threshold. I had advanced

but a single step when he seemed to hesitate. By this time the lamp was throwing the light full upon his face, and I saw a man of perhaps seventy. His hair was thick and long, perfectly white, the forehead high and broad, the eyebrows, with scarce a suspicion of grey in them, met and made a dark band across his face; there was a dreamy, restless look about his eyes; his lips and fingers were working nervously. He seemed perplexed, as if doubting what to say or do. "I am not wont to see visitors here, young sir; but as you have come in so far, come farther. Hath he not said, 'Use hospitality one to another without grudging'? Do you drink tea?"

I passed through the hall into a long room which, by the imperfect light, seemed to me even larger and loftier than it actually was. It was crowded with antique furniture as a

dealer's store might be. But the massive black oak chairs, the fantastic escritaires and cabinets, the tiny little tables of all shapes and designs, the heavy settees, and, conspicuous above all, an indescribable *bureau* rising high above everything else, were all arranged, two and three deep, along one side of the apartment. The other side was occupied by bookshelves from floor to ceiling, and between these and the furniture was a broad passage, perhaps ten feet wide,—which I used to call the *aisle* when I got upon familiar terms with Mr. Ryan, — and up and down this aisle he was wont to walk for hours when the restless fit was upon him, thinking and talking to himself, as his manner was, in a slow, aimless kind of way. For years, I was told, this was his only exercise.

At one end of the room was the door by which I had entered; then a huge fireplace in which some great

logs were burning brightly; then, where the aisle stopped, the wall was heavily draped with some antique hangings of stamped velvet. At the other end was a large oriel window, with seats in it, and a plain heavy deal table, which I guessed that Mr. Ryan had made with his own hands in one of his wayward moods. Where the old velvet curtains hung when I first entered the room, there had formerly been placed upon the floor a plain oak coffin with brass fittings; and in that coffin Mr. Ryan, for several years, had regularly laid himself down every evening, and there it was surmised he used to say his prayers. After a while *he grew too large for the coffin*, and when he could no longer get into it, or began to find that getting out of it was a perilous gymnastic feat, he had it set upright, fixing the lid on hinges and converting it into a door, of which he kept the key.



The only piece of furniture in the *aisle* that I have spoken of was a long escritoire, and before it stood a high-backed chair, stately and ponderous; the arms were a pair of writhing griffins, that faced you grimly as you entered, and lifted their grotesque heads above the level of the escritoire that they seemed to guard. Behind this chair stood a lady, her head only just above the high back, for she was very low of stature. In the window-seat was a boy who, at the first glance, I took to be about twelve; he was reading, and apparently was absorbed in the volume.

Mr. Ryan set down the lamp upon his writing-table. The light fell upon the face that rose above the chair-back. I was struck by the exquisite beauty of the head. It was bent forward; the hair was wonderfully smooth, glossy, and fine, and, parted down the middle with a perfect distinctness, such as one

rarely sees now, it was allowed to fall a little over the brow, then gathered up into a roll, and massed in coils low down upon the neck.

Her eyes were bent upon the table; she made no movement as we entered; she stood there mute as a statue. "Your name, young sir?" I told him. He paused, peered curiously at me, and a shudder passed over him.

"I have been waiting for you, young sir; waiting for many years. Not because you are a 'lively stone,' though a rumour came to me that you are, but it was your sire who threw his gentleman-commoner's gown over my drowned brother's face as they carried him through the streets of Oxford. You are his son, 'elect, precious.'"

He came up to me and kissed me on the cheek, and I did not resent it nor draw back.

"The lady Electa!" He waved his

hand to the figure behind the chair: she lifted her eyes. I smiled and bowed. The dark eyes looked down again; she was as motionless as before. The boy rose from his seat, his book in his hand, and without a word took his place at his father's side. "Marcus, my son!" I held out my hand; Marcus looked as if for permission to Mr. Ryan, then placed his hand in mine and left it there, as if he did not know what was expected of him.

As he stood before me, his hand in mine, I found him older than I had first thought him; his voice was just beginning to break, there was a soft down upon his upper lip, he was slight and evidently far from robust. He was dressed in a kind of dark-coloured pinafore, his throat bare, and the collar of his shirt turned carelessly over on this side and on that. As I looked at him it seemed to me that young Keats had walked out of his picture,

and had come to hold converse with me. I thought, "Is it all a vision, and am I only dreaming?" For a moment the room and its occupants, with their strange surroundings, swam round before me, and a sense of disappointment depressed me, for I knew I should awake to realities all too soon. How long we all stood thus silent, Mr. Ryan watching me the while, I know not; I was roused by his voice.

"Electa, Stephen's son has come!"

"My father's name was not Stephen, sir; it was John!"

"Young sir! Your father's name was Stephen! You have yet to learn the significance of names."

It was said without any emphasis or with the least sign of displeasure; but as he spoke, his back turned to his wife, the lady glanced up quickly and raised a finger to her lips. Then she blushed deeply and again looked down.

“Electa, Stephen’s son has come! Let there be tea here, — tea in twenty-three minutes. Marcus, my son, shall stay with us. Let there be toast and much butter upon it!”

He took his seat upon the high-backed chair and motioned to Marcus, who took his place by his father’s side, standing with his open, liquid eyes following my every motion, and his hand resting on the head of one of the griffins.

“May I look at the books, Mr. Ryan?”

“You may look, young sir.”

The room must have been forty feet long. One special shelf on a level with my chin was filled with the most remarkable collection of volumes on the criticism of the New Testament that I had ever seen. In fact, of only a small proportion of them had I ever heard the names. I was still in the twenties then, and I was just beginning

to feel how ignorant I was. But this shelf fairly staggered me. In the middle of the shelf stood the works of Archbishop Leighton, in four octavo volumes. They had been evidently read and re-read; they were battered and worn.

“Ah! Here is Archbishop Leighton, I see!”

“Young sir, he was an apostate!”

I turned in wonder. What did he mean?

“That any human creature should have read Simon Peter’s Epistle so often, known it so well, and understood it so little, proves that this man was begotten of corruptible seed!”

Remembering the lady Electa’s warning, I made no answer, but continued my examination.

“Oh! Mr. Ryan, this *is* a rare book! Thomas Adams on the Second Epistle of Peter! You are fortunate!”

“Fortunate! fortunate! fortunate!”

he kept on repeating, the tone growing more and more mocking and scornful.

“That is the eleventh copy of that book I have owned, young sir! It is a task I have imposed upon Marcus, my son, to tear out a leaf from that volume every day before our midday meal, and consume it in the fire upon the hearth. The Second Epistle, young sir! Tell him the truth! Tell it him, Marcus, my son!”

The boy raised his hand from the griffin and pointed to the book with his forefinger. “There never was a Second Epistle. Father knows that forged bank-notes are bad to handle. Forged epistles, father knows, are wicked and worse!”

I began to feel crushed and uncomfortable. This man knew more than I did, and I could not tell what was coming next. By chance I took up Valpy's Greek Testament. There were

no Alford's in those days. But Valpy was still a stock book for weak-kneed candidates for Holy Orders. The volume opened at St. Peter's Epistle. It was minutely annotated in a small crabbed hand.

"A sheep going astray, young sir!" said Ryan, "stumbling at the word as he goes along; a soulless pedant, prating for ever of Bos and his Greek ellipses. Let him go!" He took the book from me and laid it down upon the table.

I was relieved by the opening of the door. The lady Electa came in with a tray, and a hand holding a plate piled high with buttered toast appeared at the door. Marcus, at a sign from his father, took the plate and laid it upon the table; the door closed noiselessly.

A seat was set for me opposite the high-backed chair. "Where will Mrs. Ryan sit?" I asked.

"The lady Electa is in subjection



to her own husband; she has no seat, young sir!" She poured out the tea, Marcus standing at his father's side. Then she took her place again, silent and with downcast eyes as before. "Hush!" he said solemnly. He rose upon his feet and made the sign of the cross upon his breast, his right hand moving slowly *upwards* and pausing as if to show me how it was to be done. I did as he did. Then he drew another line with his left hand from shoulder to shoulder. The tea was good, and I was tired with my day's work and very glad of the meal. He talked continuously in a deep monotonous voice. When we had finished there was still abundance of toast upon the platter. Simon rose, "Let us walk, young sir!" He laid his hand upon my shoulder and walked me up and down that aisle between the book-shelves and the rows of furniture, backwards and forwards, backwards and forwards, till

from very weariness I said I must go. Meanwhile the mother and son had been finishing the tea; both standing all the time at the board. I had a fear of his kissing me again, so I held out my hand at arm's length. He took it. I bowed silently to the lady Electa, took Marcus playfully by his shoulders and said good-bye cordially, Ryan furtively watching me all the time. "You will come again, young sir, next week. Is Stephen yet alive?" "My father died last year," I answered, "but if I may I should like to come again. I am quite sure, sir, you can teach me a great deal. Next week I will come again."

This was my first interview with Simon Ryan.

## II.

WHO was this man? Tradition said that his father was a merchant in London, where he had amassed a considerable fortune, which he had invested partly in house property in the Borough, partly in small landed estates in the country. The old man was reported to have been eccentric and solitary in his habits, but a shrewd man of business up to the last. He had two sons, the elder of whom he named Paul, the younger Simon; there were three years between the two boys. No one could tell anything about their mother; she died a few days after her younger son was born. Paul was sent to Eton, and Simon to some of his father's correspondents on the Conti-

ment, where he acquired two or three foreign languages. When he was about fourteen his brother Paul joined him at Hamburg, and the two lived together for the next two or three years, the younger brother conceiving an idolatrous affection for the elder, which, as it appeared ridiculous to the young men with whom Paul mixed, led at last to a separation — Paul going up to Oxford, and Simon staying behind at Hamburg, where he was supposed to be qualifying for mercantile life. In his second term Paul was mysteriously drowned in the Cherwell. The news of this disaster killed old Ryan, and the shock produced upon young Simon so great an effect that his brain became affected. His father had left the youth as a ward to a worthy solicitor, into whose house he was taken, and here he transferred to a son of the house, of about his own age, the same romantic and admiring

love which he had bestowed upon his brother. Young Clarke, was, however, a very matter-of-fact young fellow, and, though he just tolerated the other's devotion, had very soon too much upon his hands to allow of his being Simon's constant companion. Simon found himself more and more lonely. He hated business; he was painfully shy and reserved; he had no profession; his means were far in excess of his wants, though he was not without tastes; he was an omnivorous reader and an enthusiastic musician.

After he came into his property, he took to wandering about, no one knew where; he had chambers in Gray's Inn from which he would disappear for a year at a time, and then suddenly he would go to his tailor to be fitted out afresh. He asked no questions and answered none. He had no friends.

One day while he was in London,

young Clarke, who managed everything for him, came and announced that he was going down to Carlton to look at the old Manor House, which was reported to be in a ruinous condition. "Let's go together, Si. It's a shame you should not go and see your own tenants; there are only half a dozen of them, but they've never set eyes on their landlord, and it may come to pulling down the old house, and I don't like doing that without your seeing it."

Simon was delighted at the prospect of a week with his friend. They went accordingly. The old Manor House was hopelessly dilapidated, but it was full of antique furniture, which had gone with the estate when Simon's father had foreclosed the mortgage, and it was a question of some difficulty what was to be done with the impedimenta. The matter ended by Simon resolving to build himself a house

after his own plans, and live in it when it was built. "What! here in this hole, Si? Here, and alone? Who's the lady, man?" The Manor House had been an Elizabethan building, one of those smaller country residences which are getting now so rare. The estate had never been a large one, and had become less and less till now it hardly exceeded five hundred acres; twenty of these acres had been planted by Simon's father close to the house, and the trees were now growing up to some height, and had been judiciously thinned out from year to year by the Clarkes, father and son. The new house was built; the plan was unique. The single hall or library faced east and west, forty feet long by twenty broad, and over it a bedroom of the same size. Along the north of this building ran a lean-to of two stories, and a similar lean-to on the east. Here were the offices, and bedrooms

over them. At the south-eastern and north-western corners were two staircases, and a passage communicated from one to the other into which all the bedrooms opened; they all looked to the north or east, and were very small.

At first the only servants in the house were a man and his wife, "without encumbrances." The man had been a farm bailiff, the wife a gentleman's housekeeper. She was a good cook, — a cleanly, methodical person, — who was mortally afraid of her master, with a kind of superstitious awe that he was wont to inspire in all who came in contact with him. Her fear of her husband was the fear of a timid creature who had suffered at his hands for years, and who never knew what he might do to her any hour of the day or night. For, though he had been a sober man at first, yet the intolerable dulness of the life gradually



preyed upon him, and every night when Mr. Ryan went up to bed as the clock struck ten, Waggles slipped out by the back door, and betook himself to the "Compasses," where a choice company was wont to assemble, and drink, and sing, and smoke till midnight. Then Waggles staggered home, invariably "the worse for liquor," and, about once a week, a dangerous ruffian to the poor frightened wife who let him in, and had hard work to keep him from howling and roaring. When he beat her she whimpered imploringly to him, beseeching him to "hold his noise," for Mr. Ryan would be sure to hear him.

Years went by. The lonely life preyed upon all the three inmates of the strange house. But Ryan himself became more and more strange. Ever since his brother's death he had never been actually insane again. But he was never sane. He began

to be absorbed more and more by a religious delusion. He wrote long letters to Harry Clarke, as he always called him, which the other never read through, and answered very curtly when some business matter had to be dealt with. The letters became more and more elaborate and didactic. At last Simon declared that he was conscious of a mission. His brother's death had been the penalty exacted for the sin against the Holy Ghost which his parents had committed at his baptism. His father had christened him Paul, and had gloried in the son that bore the accursed name; and he himself—he, Simon—had had to pay for all the infatuate love he had lavished on that best of brothers. For if that dear one had lived, he, Simon, would have been a Paulite to the end. Then came moanings of a grief that had never left him at rest; outpourings of a heart that

was for ever throbbing with unsatisfied yearnings; hints that his time for delivering his testimony against the heresies of Paul of Tarsus, the great corrupter, who had perverted the Gospel and led the generations horribly astray — yes! the time was coming.

“Poor old Si, he’s off his head again,” murmured Harry Clarke. “But he’s as clear as I am in business matters, though, and that banking account of his goes rolling up at an awful pace. I think I’ll go and see him!” One pressing engagement after another prevented this; and the letters came more and more frequently. Sometimes they would be written with long passages in Latin or German or Italian, presumably conveying esoteric communications, which Harry could not understand a sentence of, and which worried and irritated him.

“Confound the man! he takes me for a Polyglot. What’s the good of

writing to me in that wriggling German gibberish. I'll keep away!"

One day came a huge parcel containing fifty copies of a thick pamphlet. It was entitled: —

"Simon, The Testifier of the Chief Shepherd, to the Elders of the Roaring Lion. Being a Protest against the Perversions of the Truth wrought by the Tent-Maker of Tarsus."

I am told that it was an "awfully learned" polemic, which endeavoured to establish that St. Paul had been the great enemy to the spread of true Christianity and that the only hope for the success of the Gospel's acceptance by all mankind was in the excision of all the Pauline writings from the Canon of Holy Scripture, and with them the Gospel of St. Luke. The Book of the Acts of the Apostles was to be classed with "other heretical stories."

Harry Clarke was solemnly adjured

to forward a copy of this rhapsody to every Bishop on the bench, to the Professors of Divinity in the two Universities, and to certain prominent divines whom the writer named. He was further ordered, under all sorts of pains and penalties, to read the pamphlet himself and to prepare himself for what would follow.

Harry — I must needs call him by the familiar name, though he was by this time a married man with sons and daughters — Harry, I say, obeyed his injunctions in his usual business way; all except reading the pamphlet. He tried it two or three times, but he fell asleep over it again and again while smoking his cigar in the evening, and ended by flinging it into the fire and watching it burn. Not a human being appears ever to have got to the end of the crazy treatise, and, to Mr. Ryan's wonder, disappointment, even horror, not a single acknowledgment reached

him, not a single notice, public or private, came to his hand.

He became more and more self-involved and solitary in his habits; refused to let even Mrs. Wraggles come into the library; insisted that she should put his meals upon a table outside the door, and roll it into the room just far enough to allow of her shutting the door behind it. Then he began to walk out in the grounds for exactly an hour every night from nine to ten, on a broad carriage drive that he had made under the high park paling which he had set up round his little domain; gave his orders every morning to Wraggles, who had become by this time a confirmed sot; and read and wrote all day long, except when he sat down to a small organ, which he had built himself, and played upon it by the hour; now and then diversifying this solemn recreation by practising upon the violin, fitfully, incohe-

rently. He was approaching fifty, when it came to pass that one night Mrs. Wraggles, who scrupulously and most carefully dusted and cleaned the big library every night after her master had gone to his bedroom, found that the violin was missing. Fragments of it lay smouldering among the logs in the great chimney. He had burnt it. It was supposed that he had discovered he had become deaf to some high notes. Then he took the pipes out of the organ, smashed them, and flung them out of the window. In a day or two the case was burnt as the violin had been. As for the pipes, Wraggles took them away, and somehow they came into the possession of a worthless old farmer who was one of Ryan's tenants. The fellow, Hammond by name, had been ejected from the Society of Friends for some flagrant dishonesty; but he still wore the Quaker dress and still persisted in going to the

Quaker meeting-house, seven miles off, every Sunday morning.

Hammond was a shifty fellow, always behindhand with his rent, and for two years he had paid nothing at all. Harry Clarke tried to put in an execution. But Ryan would have nothing to do with the law. He grew more and more cool and reticent with Harry, when the latter's visits became fewer and fewer. What had become of the Borough property he never could discover. All he knew was that Ryan had forbidden him having more to do with it. It had simply disappeared.

One day Hammond appeared at the lodge gate, where lived one of the farm labourers, whose strict charge it was to let no living soul go through except the tradesmen furnished with a pass. He was bareheaded, and he carried in his hand a watchman's rattle, which he swung round vigorously, making a hideous clatter. "Gi' over that noise,



Mas'r Hammond, will'ee? don't, I'll throw the slops over you!"

"I come in the name of the Lord! Open the gate or a curse will fall on thee and thy name!"

There was a feeble and timid resistance. Then Hammond marched on straight into the library, flinging the door wide open, and stood before his landlord swinging his rattle with a strong arm.

The suddenness and oddity of the attack threw Ryan wholly off his guard. He stared blankly.

"Simon Ryan, I come to give thee glory. Thy light has shone in upon my heart. Behold me! I have renounced the perversions of the tent-maker. I am of Peter; not of Paul, neither of Apollos!"

A few months after this Mr. Ryan's privacy was again invaded; Harry Clarke appeared with another gentle-

man, a representative of the bankers with whom his account was kept. Some heavy cheques had been drawn on the account, beginning at £20, and followed by several for larger sums in rapid succession. At last a cheque for £1,000 was presented by a tall man dressed as a Quaker. Payment was refused, and the cheque detained.

Harry Clarke, on being referred to, unhesitatingly pronounced the signature a forgery. Ryan's wrath fell upon Harry Clarke. Prosecute? Not for all the world. Prosecute his one convert. Never!

"It is we who prosecute!" said the banker. "You will be compelled to appear as a witness, Mr. Ryan!"

But Hammond was never more seen or heard of, and of course was never put upon his trial.

. . . . .  
It must have been, I think, in 1832 that the cholera broke out in Carlton.

It fell with awful violence upon Mr. Ryan's tenants. There were eight or nine cottages, crowded dreadfully, and the hovels were in a shameful state. Fifty yards or so from this rookery stood a small house tenanted by the Baptist minister, whose chapel was a mile off. He was a fair specimen of his class, and he had a wife who had been a governess in a gentleman's family and a daughter about sixteen years old. Rumours came to Ryan that the plague was raging. When Wraggles came in for orders he was unmistakably drunk. Ryan could not be blind to it; he clutched the fellow's collar and shook him violently. "Thou limb of Paul!" he cried. "Is it a time to walk in excess of wine, revellings and banquetings, when the Gospel has never been preached to them that are dead, and thou art one of the dying?"

For once in his life Wraggles — potvaliant — dared to make answer.

“That’s all very fine, master. You’re a jolly Peterite, you are! If there ain’t no Gospel, you go and give it ’em! That’s all I say. You’d want a drop too if you saw ’em in among them cottages o’ yourn!”

It was a call to Simon Ryan. He did go among the dying and the dead. He seemed to bear a charmed life. The scenes he saw were indescribably horrible. Mr. Merrison, the Baptist minister, was smitten; he died in frightful agonies. The miserable and penniless widow followed her husband to the grave after laying him in his coffin with her own hands. She recovered from the cholera herself only to die a week later from sheer exhaustion. “Dolly, my darling!” she kept saying during those last hours. “Dolly, do everything that God and Mr. Ryan bid you. Between the two you’ll never come to harm. Dolly! Do as they two bid you, and especially do what Mr. Ryan tells you is right!”

Then she fell asleep and never woke. The girl was stunned.

After the funeral, Dolly found herself an inmate of Mr. Ryan's house, she did not know how. She had one of the little bedrooms. It was hot summer, and she wanted no better apartment. Wraggles had fallen a victim to the cholera. The drink had helped that on; and Dolly and Mrs. Wraggles were drawn together in a kind of sad friendship. They were both bereaved ones and forlorn. Somehow the old strict and terrible discipline of the household had relaxed. Mrs. Wraggles had demanded help in the house; Simon had granted her two under-servants on condition that neither of them ever entered the library, and that neither ever appeared in his presence, nor were their voices ever to be heard. He himself would never be their master, or be referred to. Mrs. Wraggles must engage them and dismiss them

as she pleased. Ryan's walks in the "grounds" became less regular. He missed Wraggles, and the new bailiff jarred against his feelings. He began to walk out at all times of the day. The harvest had set in. Ryan actually went and looked on at the reapers,—there were real reapers in those days. He mused shyly, speaking to none, only silently bowing in response to the greetings. "Largess, Mas'r! Largess!" broke out from some voices. The cry grew to a general shout, and the men, sickles in hand, came crowding about him. He put his hand in his pocket, and drew out a golden guinea.

"The end of all things is at hand!" he said. "Be ye therefore sober!"

The lord of the harvest—for in those days that functionary still had a recognized position in many parishes—pulled off his hat, and, scarcely believing his eyes, took the shining coin, spun it high up in the air, and shouted

with triumphant joy: "There's largess, mates!" There were shrieks of wondering rejoicing, and Mr. Ryan left them, to finish his perambulation.

As he approached the house, there was Dolly! She came to meet him swiftly in great agitation. "Mr. Ryan! Oh, Mr. Ryan! I've never found a word. I've never seen you — my heart is so very, very full! Oh, Mr. Ryan! may n't I — may n't I kiss your hand?"

She dropped on her knees, and before he could prevent her she had caught his hand and kissed it again and again. He was utterly perplexed and walked slowly on, — she sobbing as if her heart would break, trying to speak and finding no articulate utterance; he silent and frightened by his own emotion. He passed into the library and shut her out. She went and hid her face in Mrs. Wraggles' lap, the good woman mingling her tears with the girl's, and softly stroking the

glossy hair on the beautiful head while she poured forth many a gentle commonplace which yet it was a comfort to speak and a comfort to listen to.

All that day Simon was restless. He walked up and down the *aisle* for hours. As the time for dinner drew near, he went to the door and left it wide open. Mrs. Wraggles was ordered to bring in the tray. An hour later she came back; Simon was still walking, and the dinner was untouched. She ventured to ask him if she should warm it up. He looked at her dreamily. "Tell Miss Merrison that this room is open to her."

That room! That sacred, mysterious room, with the coffin standing grimly there — did he mean it?

"When, Mr. Ryan?"

"Now."

The young girl, who had heard all about the coffin, and was prepared for it, came in without hesitation, all beam-



ing with the joy of an immense gratitude, and met him in his walk. He turned from her and sat down upon the high-backed chair.

“Why did they christen you Dolly?”

“They did n’t christen me at all; I have never been baptised.”

He started up with a look of horror on his face.

“Not baptised? Not a Christian? Everywhere the trail of the serpent! The great perverter still at work. The tent-maker that boasted he had baptised none of them. Wretched girl!”

“Whatever you bid me I will do, Mr. Ryan. What less could I do?”

Three weeks later the rector of the parish received a wondrous missive from Simon. He invited him to a conference. The rector was a well-meaning and earnest man, and, more than that, a man of robust good sense and tact. Somehow his pleasant voice and fearless outspokenness told with

Simon. There were concessions made on both sides, and "Dolly" was baptized in the church, one week-day morning, and received the name of Electa.

"I very nearly christened our young friend Electra," said the parson as he took off his surplice. "She has a new name in more senses than one."

Simon looked at him severely.

"New? Such are ye all, — Paulicians every one. What know ye of the Word — ye that look as through a glass darkly? Ye who know nothing about those things of which the chief of the Apostles wrote save what ye find in your mean and beggarly mother-tongue. New, is it? New — that at Simon Peter's side at Babylon there sat the Lady Electa whom ye, after your fashion, call 'the Church,' forsooth. Ye who know not that John the son of thunder wrote his loving letter to that same Lady Electa in the

years of her widowhood when Simon Peter had been nailed to his cross."

The rector smiled and made no reply. Why should he argue with a madman?

Every morning during the previous month Electa had been summoned into the library to be taught the mysteries of the true faith. Simon went on by the hour, walking, talking, swinging his arms. What a joy to have found a disciple at last, one so docile and patient too, and growing day by day more reverent, submissive, and over-awed! It was a new life to the girl. Her father had been a hard, narrow man; a man of Scripture phrases, poured out by the yard; a man of unctuous manner with Dr. Watts's hymns for ever on his lips; a man of no knowledge, of vulgar manners, which offended and at times disgusted his more refined wife; a man too coarse in the grain to have any

tenderness. He swallowed his victuals, spoke through his nose, made long prayers in a loud monotonous voice, but left "the womankind," as he called them, to go their own way, and hurled Bible texts at them when, on his return from his long perambulations, he found them reading together out of the dozen or so volumes of poetry, Milton, Cowper, Campbell's "Pleasures of Hope," Gray, and a few others, which his wife had provided herself with in her younger days.

To Electa the new life was full of revelations. The comparative luxury of the house as compared with the poverty she had been accustomed to; the contact with a man of original ideas, pouring out every moment some startling fact or suggestion such as she had never dreamed of before; the flashes of actual eloquence, lighting up the unintelligible jargon of philosophical and theosophic speculation, drawled

out by the hour in a low, mysterious, sing-song till she knew not whether the speaker was human or divine, and her heart beat quick and her breathing well-nigh ceased as the sense of awe and mystery wrapt her round.

But with this intellectual ascendancy that Simon had acquired over his disciple there can be no doubt that, quite unconsciously, he was exercising a most potent *mesmeric* mastery over the girl. She had become his constant companion now in the mornings. At two o'clock Mrs. Wraggles would bring in dinner for the pair. Now the cloth was laid on the long writing-table and they sat opposite one another, he with his eyes continually turned upon her, she every now and then giving him a bright, glad look of gratitude. After the meal she invariably withdrew without a word and joined Mrs. Wraggles. To the old woman Electa talked only of Simon, tried to

repeat his lessons, to explain his views, to show how Paul of Tarsus was a bad man, "the cuckoo's egg that the roaring lion had laid in the nest of the eagle John and ousted Simon Peter, the real bird of Paradise, the hope of the race." Mrs. Wraggles would go to sleep over the revelations. The truth is, she did n't care a dump for all this "Peterite" theology. Not she! She yawned, she bustled about. She was glad when ten o'clock came, and blessed the Lord she had no drunken husband now to disturb her rest, the rest which was so sweet. Then Electa would go to her little bedroom, and sleep such sleep as she had not known a little while ago.

## III.

THE morning after the christening Mrs. Wraggles was surprised by meeting her punctual and precise master at the door of the library at an earlier hour than usual. He stood for a few seconds irresolute; opened the door as if about to enter, then stepped back and passed out of the house. Neither she nor any one would have dared to shut that door when Simon had left it open, nor open it when it was shut.

The hours went by; Electa, sitting at her open window, listened to the ring-dove cooing to his mate yonder in the tree, heard the ploughmen in the distance talking to their horses, watched the sunbeams dancing in the foliage, or was it the leaves that were dancing for joy in the morning light? What a

glorious world it was! Yes! Simon was right, it was glorious. Paul of Tarsus could not change *that*. Alas for the nightingale that had grown songless now! When would he sing again? She would ask Simon by and by.

But where was Simon? She grew restless; went in and out of the library, began to level the books on the shelves, examined the queer old furniture, wondered how Mrs. Wraggles could keep it so free from dust; went back to Mrs. Wraggles in the kitchen, found that the good woman was getting seriously uneasy. The bailiff had come for his day's orders, and gone away after waiting an hour or more.

"Can anything have happened, Mrs. Wraggles?"

"I don't know, deary. But I know what's agoing to happen. There's only one end to it."

She looked slyly at the poor girl, who had not the faintest suspicion of



her meaning; she only thought of her dead father and dead mother. Would *he* die too? She snatched up her sun-bonnet.

"I'll go and find him. I *must* find him."

She darted out on her search.

Mrs. Wraggles chuckled merrily to herself.

"You'd no need to find him, my deary. He's all right. You've found him sure enough, for all his jerrytantrums."

But Electa was gone. She found him walking much more slowly than usual. He was thinking, dreaming, or was he awake? He took no notice of her. She took him by the sleeve and led him to the house. Not a word passed. She brought him back into the library, seated him in the high-backed chair, left him, and passed out, closing the door behind her.

The dinner hour passed. It was out

of the question to let him go on without food. Mrs. Wraggles appeared with the tray.

“ Bid the lady Electa come to me ! ”

She came.

“ Electa, what was that you meant to ask me ? ”

“ Ask you, Mr. Ryan ? There are a hundred things I ’d like to ask you ! ”

“ No, there was only one to-day. Only one. ” She was startled, almost frightened. Could he really read her lightest thoughts ? She had never seriously meant to ask him the question. Somehow a shiver of revolt came upon her. Why should she ask ? He rose from his chair. One step nearer to her and the words seemed to come through her, not from her.

“ When will the nightingale sing again, Mr. Ryan ? ”

His eyes were on her, coldly watching her.

“ Was that all ? The nightingale

sings to his mate in the nest, Electa. The poets say it is all for love. When will he sing again? When he finds his bride in her home!"

He came to her side. He put his hand upon her head, she felt it trembling violently; he had never touched her so before. What did he mean?

"Mr. Ryan!"

"I bid you no longer call me by any other name but Simon."

Her dying mother's charge came back upon her with a tumult of conflicting emotions. The room was swimming round; she had no will of her own; she knew it. Was consciousness going? With a desperate effort she drew away from him. Her eyeballs throbbed so painfully that she was compelled to close her eyelids; she could not speak, she leant against the table. Her very personality was going from her. A cry broke from her lips — "Simon!"

“Electa! I bid you be my wife. I am about to take you as my wife. Your dying mother saw it all, and knew it would come.”

She answered never a word. She rushed to her room and flung herself upon the bed. There Mrs. Waggles found her some hours later. It was a hot September evening, but she was deadly cold. When good Mrs. Waggles folded her in her arms she wept like some stricken child. By and by she recovered. She began to speak.

“He bids me. He bids me. What am I to do? He bids me — but, he only bids me! Oh, what can I do. Mrs. Waggles?”

Next morning, punctual to the moment, Simon was in the library at the usual hour. At Simon's call she came, looking very wan; she almost shrank from him as he drew near. He took her face between his two strong hands and held it up to himself. The crim-

son blush mantled over her cheek and brow, but she did not look at him. He held her so for a few moments, her arms hung loosely by her side.

“Mrs. Waggles tells me you have eaten nothing since yesterday morning, Electa! I have not tasted food since we dined together last. When was that?” He took his hands from her face and pressed them hard to his own forehead. He seemed to be in physical pain.

“Mr. — Simon!”

He started. There was a sudden flash of joy that gleamed in his eyes, and a smile upon his lips which she had never seen before.

“We will break our fast together. Shall we?”

He had never gone so near consulting her wishes before. They both needed food — neither spoke. At last he broke the silence.

“Well! Electa — well?”

“What my mother bade me do with her dying breath — that I will do — obey you, Mr. Ryan.”

He walked fiercely up and down the room, his hands clutching each other with convulsive grips. He was fighting with himself. It was she who was unmoved now. Since last night she had grown from a child into a woman. She was rigid as marble and as cold. With him it was doubtful whether he would not break out into frantic violence. At last he stopped before her.

“‘Mr. Ryan’ — remember! Mr. Ryan will never bid you do aught again while his life lasts. No! not if your mother rose from the dead and came to him as an angel of light. Never! never! If it is to be no more than ‘Mr. Ryan.’”

“Oh, Simon, Simon! Forgive me. I did not mean it. God forbid I should mean it, when you have been my only

friend. I will marry you as you bid me. You Simon . . . dear!"

He came to her again, and again took her face between his hands. Now she looked bravely into his eyes. He reeled, dropped his hands, he dared not trust himself to look again.

"Will you marry me on Thursday week?" It was Tuesday then.

"So soon? Oh, Simon! Must it be so?"

A whole world of difficulties came crowding into her thought. She put them all by.

"Simon! Did you never love—*love*—any one in all your life? I thought when people married . . . they . . . Well! . . . I thought there was love then. : . . Simon, did you never *love* any one?"

"Never, as the nightingales do! Electa! It will come. Be not afraid! There was a love passing the love of women that was buried in my dead

brother's grave!" His lips quivered, his whole face worked; he turned away, took down a book from the shelves — made as if he would read it. She slipped quietly out of the room.

There was much commotion and excitement in the house. With the delicate feeling of a born gentleman and an honourable man, Simon provided that Electa should at once be received into the rector's family. He insisted on the good clergyman accepting a liberal allowance, and sent him twenty pounds in advance "for the first month." Mr. Benson was a widower, with two unmarried daughters of a certain age — which usually means a very uncertain age. They took the little maiden in and fondled her. She was beginning to open her heart to them, and even ventured to caress the younger of the two, meekly, timidly.

On the day before the appointed



Thursday — of which Electa had never spoken, even to Mrs. Wraggles — came a missive from Simon requiring the attendance of Mr. Benson, and requesting that he would bring Electa and his daughters with him. To the surprise of all, as they entered, there sat Harry Clarke, now a portly gentleman with a red face, very grave, but for all that very jovial-looking. A man of business, every inch of him; but a joyous and frolicsome man of business too. He was dressed in the full dress of the time, — a blue “tail coat” with gilt buttons, a white waistcoat, and a lace frill to his shirt. How well I remember those blue coats and brass buttons in my boyhood. The rector and his daughters were quite unprepared for the scene. Electa was preternaturally calm.

“I have called you in, sir, to marry me to the lady Electa!”

“No waste of words, at any rate,

Mr. Ryan," said the rector, testily. "Marry you? Much more easily said than done. You seem to think you can be married in this room under the —!" He stopped, for the coffin was gone. Confusion fell upon him. Harry Clarke's face wrinkled up into deep seams of gathering laughter, which resolved itself into nose-blowing and an irrepressible cough. There were voluminous and serviceable bandanas in those days — the friends in need.

"You will marry me where I please and when I please!" said Simon, curtly, his voice rising in sharp, angry menace. "I think you have not brought your surplice, and you men of Paul can do nothing without the tent-maker's sail-cloth. Go and fetch it, sir!"

Electa walked straight to him and put her hand upon his arm.

"Simon! Hush! Be pitiful. Be courteous!" The calm, simple dig-

nity of the girl was irresistible. "God save the Queen!" shouted Harry, as he slapped Simon on the shoulder. "For, by George, Si! you've won a queen! Now, hold your tongue and let me speak!"

After something like apologies offered and frankly accepted, the rector did go and fetch his surplice. For it turned out that Harry was the bearer of a Special Licence from the Archbishop of Canterbury, for the which a terrific fee had been paid. The seal alone sent a shudder through the minds of the rector's daughters. While their father was gone, some of the furniture was moved by the ladies, and a small table was placed before the great window. "It really does look more churchy now, does n't it, Electa?"

Harry produced a tray of wedding rings which he had brought down with him. Electa tried one after another. At last she chose the right one.

“There, Si! Don’t you drop it, man. Fits like a glove!” Electa had taken off her hat and laid her gloves in it: poor grey thread gloves. When she took her place at the extemporised altar her hands were bare and her soft hair somewhat frayed. One of the young ladies offered to smooth it. “No! He takes me as I am. Let it be!”

Thus they were married. Harry Clarke managed to get rid of the parson and his daughters. To the rector he was charged to deliver a splendid honorarium. The poor man wanted it badly, and had never dreamt of such an extravagant fee.

“Now, Si! I’ve only got another hour! Look alive! Pleasure first but business afterwards. Mrs. Ryan must know all about it!”

“The lady Electa, if you please, from henceforth!”

“As you will! You lucky old dog! Thus stands the matter. Thirty-seven

thousand and odd pounds to your credit at Childs' bank. You give half to the lady Electa, and she is to have that half paid into the Bank of England and only she is to draw upon it. Here's a cheque for eighteen thousand five hundred, which I am to pay to the lady's credit as directed. First and foremost, sign that. Next, here's my authority to take the lady's signature. Three times, if you please. Thank you! Now that's done. Lastly, I mean to have a bottle of champagne, old Si! If you haven't got such a thing, I've brought the article in my portmanteau!" He bounced out of the room, followed by her whom he called old Straggles, and returned bearing a tray with some choice Venetian glasses, which they had hunted up from one of the stores of miscellaneous articles of which the house was full.

"Pop you go!" he filled the glasses, forcing one into Simon's hand and another into Electa's.

"Here's to friendship renewed and wedlock cemented. The God of Simon Peter bless you, old man! I think she'll bring you straight — I know she will — if only you'll let her!"

His post-chaise was at the door in another moment, his hand was in Simon's. "May I, Si?" he cried, with a roguish look. "May I? You old fox!"

Simon flung his arms round her neck and kissed her lips.

"Yes, Harry, you may — now!"

He had one minute's "talk and tip," as he called it, with Straggles.

"That's over, Mas'r Harry!"

"Good job too, Straggles!"

"He's older 'n me!"

"Pooh! He's only fifty-five!"

"And she's just seventeen!"

"I would n't *she* her, if I were you, Straggles. Mrs. Ryan's old enough. That's all right!"

"What's three times one, Mas'r

Harry? You can't alter that, anyhow."

He lit a big cigar, jumped into the post-chaise, and was gone.

And this was the wedding festival of Simon Ryan and the lady Electa.

#### IV.

THERE was change in the household. Simon exacted from his wife the closest personal attendance. He could not bear her to be out of his sight.

She became his daily pupil and scribe. All the morning was spent among the books. She acquired something more than a respectable acquaintance with Greek, a certain faculty in translating Latin; her mother had taught her a smattering of French, which she pronounced ridiculously. Simon would now and then laugh with an odd chuckle at her blunders; but he was always patient with her and he had never been so happy in his life. The Petrine monomania seemed to be



leaving him slowly. Now and then, however, he would recur to the old dogmatic tone and frighten Electa with, what she dreaded, solemn ravings about the "tent-maker;" getting excited and restless, walking up and down the *aisle* and talking to himself, forgetting she was near him. The Benson ladies tried to get admittance to the house. Sometimes they were grudgingly allowed to walk with Electa in the grounds, but never for long. He would come upon them and scowl forbiddingly. One day she expostulated good-humouredly with him. "Simon! I do believe you are jealous of Mary Benson. How silly you must be!"

"Yea, Electa! with a godly jealousy! It is not meet that these Paulite women should have their way. They plait their hair and are not afraid with any amazement." He wandered on incoherently. It was hours before he was himself again.

Shortly after their marriage he forbade Electa any longer making her own dresses. She should have a maid. There was a fine, handsome girl in the parish who had been apprenticed to a dressmaker, become engaged to a young tradesman in Camford, and had been heartlessly jilted by him. The girl came back to Carlton humbled and soured. She was glad to be taken as the lady Electa's attendant, and with her work as sempstress she united the duties of parlour-maid. Mrs. Wraggles whimpered and chafed, but in the library she was quite superseded. Simon had once heard her in loving talk with Electa call her "my deary!" It was an unpardonable offence. Prudence, when she came to present herself before Electa, called her "my lady." Simon signified that she was engaged. Prudence justified her name and never forgot to speak of her mistress as "her ladyship."

They had been married just two years. It was "chill October;" there were fitful gusts from the northwest showering down the leaves; the day was closing in; Simon had been mumbling to himself at intervals during the afternoon. It was a bad sign, and Electa was disturbed and anxious.

"Electa, let us walk!"

"No, Simon. I can't walk to-day — not now!"

She rose from her seat, wearily went to him, played with one of the buttons of his waistcoat, her head bowed. "I shall not be able to walk much now, Simon!" He looked hurt and sullen.

"Don't you know? Can't you guess, Simon?"

The glory of a great joy lit up her whole face — "Simon!"

He threw up his arms above his head, clasped his hands with a wild cry: "Eternal Father! Hast Thou heard and granted?"

The child was born — it was a boy. Mr. Benson brought a little silver font to the library and baptised the child — Marcus.

The funniest tales were told of the doings and sayings of the father of that child. I must needs pass them by.

Up to this time there had not been a fireplace in any bedroom of the house except in Simon's own. The "young usurper" necessitated many changes. Harry Clarke, now quite restored to favour, came much more frequently to Carlton than formerly. A nursery had to be built — and a regular nurse was of course added to the establishment. Simon was for ever in and out of the nursery — "interfering," as the nurse tartly complained. The child never cried. He looked out of his big eyes and seemed to be inquiring; but he evinced a reluctance to be handled by his father, and would stretch out his little arms to Electa or the nurse when

Simon took him awkwardly out of his cradle.

"You mustn't take him up by his clothes that way, sir! You'll do him a mischief. Won't he, my pet?" Nurse took him out of the parental arms and fondled him with a show of decided ownership. Simon went down to Electa in the library. "I won't have that woman about here any more, Electa; she's a thief!"

"Oh, Simon!"

"I tell you she's stealing Marcus, my son!"

Electa had become quite light-hearted and playful in her new happiness. All fear of Simon was passing away. It was months since he had had one of his mumbling fits upon him. He seemed to be gradually losing the Peterite craze. Now she called him a silly old Simon, coaxed him, remonstrated with him, told him she could n't do without the nurse. It was

nonsense! He began to walk up and down with his hands behind him muttering to himself: "Wives be in subjection! . . . a meek and quiet spirit — meek. Sara obeyed Abraham!" She became very uneasy — ran up and fetched the child, who seemed to understand her; held him up to his father, and put his little arms round Simon's neck. "Steal him, my blossom? Who can steal him, my blossom?"

The door opened and there stood Harry Clarke. He saw the situation at a glance. "Well done, Si — to perfection!" Then, in a stentorian voice, he sang: —

"Send her victorious,  
Happy and glorious,  
Long to reign over us,  
God save the Queen."

There was no resisting his cheery greetings!

Simon recovered himself. He gave back the child to his mother, who hurried away to the nursery; but she

did not feel safe. She had a foreboding that something was wrong.

It became clear that he was jealous of the nurse — violently jealous. He would not go into the nursery; he moped and he called for “Marcus, my son,” but would not take him at any hands but his mother’s. Then he would go and hide himself for hours in one of the little rooms of which he kept the key. Prudence vowed she’d find out what he was up to. Audacious Prudence! Peeping through the keyhole one day she spied the coffin of polished oak of which she had never heard, the lid thrown back on its hinges, and Simon sitting in it, staring wildly. She did not lose her presence of mind, but ran down to Mrs. Waggles and told her. Mrs. Waggles, who was of a loving and forgiving nature, bore no grudge against the girl. She bade her keep her own counsel if she wanted to stay

where she was. "I ain't a bit surprised," she said. "I've been a-thinking Master's been getting thin o' purpose to get into that gaudy old coffin again."

. . . . .

"Simon! Marcus knows all his letters now — every one. He's beginning to spell. This morning he spelt B-A-D and B-O-Y."

His education had begun! The child, now three or four years old, was under his mother's tuition. Every morning he was brought into the library, and there sat his parents, — she teaching, he looking on from the high-backed chair; the child standing between them, or making pothooks and writing copies at a little desk which was his own. He got on amazingly. He had no difficulties; it all seemed to come by nature.

Once again Harry Clarke burst in upon them in his irrepressible way



while they were at lessons. That irrepressible Harry! That irresistible Harry! The child jumped from his seat, ran up to him, caught him by his trousers, and made as if he would climb up to him. Harry picked him up with a shout, tossed him up into the air, caught him, tossed him up again, then buried his little face in his long bushy beard, and looked at him merrily.

“That is Marcus, my son!” said Simon, gloomily knitting his brows.

“There’s no doubt about that, old boy! There’s the prophet, and there’s the queen, and here’s the Markey, and I’m granny, ain’ I, Markey?”

“Marcus, if you please, Marcus, my son!”

“All right, Si,” and in his jovial way he shook hands with Electa. Simon’s hand made no return to his pressure. Marcus drew nearer to him. He picked him up and sat him on his knee.

Marcus employed himself in examining his watch-chain, whereby hung a great assemblage of trumpery, from a compass down to a steel pen, which he vowed was the first steel pen made in Britain.

Harry had come down on some business that required prompt attention. An extravagant offer had been made for one of Simon's small estates in Surrey. Harry strongly recommended the sale. Simon from the day of his marriage had left himself entirely in Harry's hands. He could not do enough to show that he had taken back into favour the friend of his youth and early manhood. This morning he hesitated. What need to sell? Why part with the inheritance of his fathers? Harry saw there were clouds in the horizon, but his unfailing tact forsook him not. He dropped the subject, rattled on, put the child down, who by a happy chance ran

straight to his father to show him a tiger's claw which Harry had slyly torn off his chain and put into the little hand, closing the fingers over it. Simon bent over little Marcus and took his face between his hands, as once before he had done to another face some seven years ago. Electa watched him, wondering. The shadow passed from his face; his voice changed; the evil spirit had gone. "So you won't sell, eh? Then there's an end of that. I guess there'll be a kick-up in Tokenhouse Yard; and what'll my client say? Whew! I'm going to smoke in the grounds, as you call 'em."

"I will sell, Harry! You know best. I will sell. The proceeds — corruptible things, silver and gold — shall be dealt with as before, — an equal division."

"Simon!" said Electa, hurriedly. "I hate your doing this. What use

are all these thousands to me? I've never drawn a cheque in my life, and I should not know how to do it. Don't give me any more, Simon dear!"

"Never drawn a cheque yet, my lady?" and he opened his mouth and big eyes, and held up his hands and looked so comical that little Marcus laughed a little repressed laugh, and would have laughed more but that he was afraid.

"Come, my lady! I've got something to sell, and you must buy it. Bid her, Simon; let the queen obey the prophet. I've bought a rocking-horse for Marcus, as big as a donkey; but he sha'n't have it unless the lady Electa buys it, and draws a cheque for it, too. *You* buy it? Not you, Si! Not for all the wealth of the Indies. Only the lady Electa—only her first cheque shall buy that horse! Prudence, come and lend a hand." He

flung himself out of the room, and returned with an enormous package, which he and Prudence between them carried into the aisle. Sacking, and string, and tow, and paper were stripped off, while Simon sat silent, quite mastered by the rollicking vehemence of his friend — Marcus in great excitement, but in more fear than hope.

At last the wrappings were all removed, and, lo! a piebald steed of unusual size on gilded rockers was galloping upon the sacred aisle, Harry swinging it till it seemed likely to topple over.

“There’s my horse for sale. It goes to one bidder. I mean to make a haul by that horse. Cheap? No, you are not going to get a bargain out of me. Price, a ten-pound draft on the Bank of England, and that draft signed by her ladyship!”

She went to Simon; he taught her

her first lesson in drawing cheques. Harry took the draft, and put it into his breast-pocket.

"Now you may laugh as you like, I'll join you. Fifty per cent on cost price isn't a bad morning's work. Hold him on, Si, we'll give him a ride."

. . . . .

Harry Clarke's visit was soon over. Simon was restless again next morning. Marcus came as usual for his lessons. Simon began to walk up and down and to mutter, " . . . Unto them which believe. . . . What of them that believe not? . . . He is a man of Mammon. . . . He is of Apollos. Fifty per cent. . . . Mammon! Mammon! "

She went up to him, led him back to the old chair. "Now, Marcus, read that again to father."

After the lessons were over he broke the silence. "Electa! *Has* he a grandchild? "

“Who? Mr. Clarke? No! Not yet, not yet!”

“We must guard him — keep him from being led away. Electa, he is a chosen generation!”

“Who, Simon?”

“Marcus, my son!”

. . . . .

It soon became evident that Simon was becoming the victim of a new delusion. He was jealous of everybody — of everything. The rocking-horse was taken into the hall. Marcus was fascinated by it, was for ever talking to it, “grooming” it, riding on it. Simon began to hate it as a rival. One day it was packed up and sent back to Harry with a request that Electa’s draft might be returned. Harry was seriously vexed and hurt; but he knew his man and he made all due allowances. As to the draft, it never was presented for payment, that was the last thing the worthy Harry

had ever thought of — but return it — not for all the world !

The nurse was summarily dismissed on Marcus's fifth birthday. Simon after that would not allow mother or son to be out of his sight night or day. He undertook all the tuition himself. Marcus became dreadfully interested in the lessons, for he learnt with extraordinary rapidity.

In a year or two he had left Electa far behind, but he began to walk in his sleep and to dream continually. Electa saw the danger, but she had no choice but to submit; Simon's strength of will mastered her; she lived in a state of continual dread of what might come. One night, as she lay miserably thinking — thinking — thinking — and all to no purpose, the fountain of her tears quite dry, Simon breathing deeply in profound slumber by her side, Marcus crept from his bed at the other end of the great bedroom, so noiselessly that



she did not hear his step. "Mother," whispered the boy, "you're not sleeping; I don't sleep now, so I know!" She threw her arms round his neck and kissed him fondly. "Go back, darling; you'll wake him up and make him so angry." He left her without a word. Simon turned in his sleep. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" he murmured. "Yea, Lord! yea, Lord! and Marcus, my son;" he was sleeping again. When the lesson began next morning Marcus was for the first time listless—leant his head upon his hand; then he fell forward; Electa caught him in her arms. She called loudly for Prudence. "Send for Dr. Rawdon! Quick! at once." By good luck the doctor was just passing the lodge; in five minutes he was examining the boy, who was lying unconscious, his mother supporting his head and bathing his face with water.

Dr. Rawdon was an able and saga-

cious man. He was noted for never talking of his patients to others; their secrets, he used to say, were their secrets; it was infamy for a medical man to divulge what only he could know. This had won him the confidence of Simon, who was just a little afraid of him.

"How old is the boy now? He must be past twelve, is n't he?"

Yes, he was nearly thirteen. The doctor gently lifted his eyelids, put his hand upon his head, looked very grave. He soon came to himself. Simon stood a little way off, looking stupid and bewildered.

"Take him to his room, ma'am, and lay him on his bed."

"He sleeps in our room, Doctor. He has done so for years."

"He must never do that again. Mr. Ryan! if you don't take care you'll lose this boy; you're working him to death."

From that day the teaching came to an end; Marcus was left to his own devices as far as books were concerned. He had a bad fortnight of it. He slept himself into a recovery; but he was frail and languid. Electa took possession of him; Simon's occupation seemed gone. She sent for an upholsterer to fit up what had been the nursery. It was done regardless of expense, but the man was told there must be no silk or satin and no gay colours. It assumed a dull, dreary, massive appearance. Heavy *rep* curtains and ugly armchairs and sofas, solid, costly, and new. The boy ripped open one of the over-stuffed sofas, and made Prudence make him a comfortable cushion or two. From this room Simon was excluded by the doctor's orders. Marcus was proud of the tremendous four-poster, with its stiff drapery, and revelled in the great fluffy feather bed, and was soon gay and

bright in the pride of possessing a room of his own.

Simon began to live apart now. His Peterite fancies returned in fuller force than ever. He took his meals in state, demanding that Electa should stand behind his chair and Marcus at his side. It was the homage due to him from the wife and son whom he had almost renounced. He was engaged upon a new and important volume, — an expansion of the pamphlet which had so signally failed. Marcus was allowed to go out and roam among the plantations, now grown into thick woods, that had been neglected for years, but outside the park palings he was sternly forbidden to roam. Sometimes he would even climb the trees and look out on the illimitable world beyond. How far did it stretch? And where was that Rome where Simon Peter died with his head downwards? And Babylon, with that vast temple?

Was Peter's wife like his mother, who bore her name? How could he get to Babylon? Did she stay and die there when the great Apostle went away to martyrdom? He became a dreamer. When the birds sang he answered them. Would he ever get to know their language?

V.

IT was during this period that I, by what seemed a mere chance, had gained admittance to the curious household. At my second visit Simon was waiting for me with a plot against me. He made a dead set at the young parson who had been rash enough to declare that he was prepared to learn from those who were qualified to teach him. I had hardly taken my seat before I was bidden to listen to the voice of truth. To my dismay I was told that he was going to read me the first chapter of his "Message to the Perverted." For more than an hour did I submit, and I was rewarded for my patience and humility. My reward was an opportunity of talking to

Marcus. I was very careful in my approaches. I talked lightly, gaily. Simon listened and was evidently glad I should go on. There was not the sign of jealousy, and when I began to walk up and down the aisle the old man's face assumed an expression of half-amusement. I think he took it as a compliment that I should imitate him! Electa kept her place behind his chair, always with downcast eyes, but I felt she was watching me. Marcus would every now and then walk beside me, trying to keep pace with my long strides. One day I began to ask him some conundrums. He never guessed them, but when the answer came he would clap his hands with childish glee and run to Simon. "Did you hear that, father?" and sometimes break into a laugh. It was all so new to them all, and so evidently new that to me it was almost painfully pathetic. During all this time—for

my visits extended over several weeks — I had hardly exchanged a word with the lady Electa.

. . . . .

One day I called much earlier than usual at the Manor House. I had only another fortnight to remain at Carlton. The spring had set in with much less than its usual severity. The tassels were red upon the larches; the primroses were smiling graciously on the banks; the blackthorn was almost going off; the leaves were unfolding in the sunshine. Simon looked up wearily, his face in his hands. Electa was standing behind his chair, her chin leaning on her folded hands.

“Mr. Ryan, may Marcus take me through the woods and show me the way?”

“Young sir, Marcus, my son, may take you where you will. And you may take him wherever he fain would go!”



The boy jumped up from his usual seat in the window. He seized me by the hand and hurried me along, as if afraid lest the permission should be retracted. For the first time I noticed what ought to have been plain to me before — that there was that dangerous yellow hue on his cheek which always tells a sad tale — the patch of carmine grew deeper, then faded away; the pupils of the eyes were distended, and as we reached the air he coughed a short, hard cough once and again.

“You take me first and then I’ll take you!”

It was uttered in a kind of hurried gasp, and in great excitement.

“Where shall I take you?”

“Take me to the church. I want to see the inside of a church!”

To the church we marched.

Some one had lately presented an organ to the parish, and one of the neighbouring clergy happened to have

come to try the instrument. Mr. Benson himself was blowing the bellows. We passed through the lodge gates defiantly, and when some fifty yards from the church Marcus stopped with parted lips and put his hand upon my arm. "What's that?" He had actually never heard a musical instrument before in his life. He hurried in at a run. Just as we got inside the porch that overwhelming outburst in Beethoven's *Hallelujah to the Father* broke forth as if with a greeting of rapturous praise. Marcus made one step forward, and clung for support to the back of the nearest seat, staring at vacancy, trembling and haggard. The rector pointed sternly to the lad to take off his hat. Marcus heeded not — stood there as in a trance, a deadly pallor upon his face. Suddenly the music stopped, for the wind was out. Marcus uttered a piercing cry and covered his face with his hands. Sobs came

from him with such violence of emotion that I threw my arms round him to support him. It was several minutes before he became calm. I took him back to the house. We had not walked two miles, yet he was almost prostrated before we reached the library, and he looked very ill.

“Mr. Ryan, I’m afraid Marcus, your son, is very, very far from well! I am going to send Dr. Rawdon to look at him. I pass his house on my way, and it is time for me to get back.” Electa darted an eloquent look of gratitude at me. Marcus was lying listlessly on one of the old sofas.

“There’s a voice that bids me not say nay to you to-day, young sir!”

Next week I could not get over to Carlton. The week after I went to say farewell. Simon had grown slow and feeble; I think he must have had a slight seizure. He was quite alone. Where was the lady Electa? “She hath

forsaken me!" was all he answered. The truth was, she was with her son. There had been a sad revolt from his authority. Marcus was desperately ill. Dr. Rawdon with almost brutal frankness told her the boy was dying. The mother found her courage and resolve in the face of the dreary prospect. It came at last to this. "Simon, if I *must* choose, I take my post beside my son! You may curse me, you may kill me; I will never leave my boy again." From that time she never left the poor lad's bed. For the disease, as often happens, had developed with frightful rapidity, and he had not a month of life remaining.

I raised my voice intentionally. Prudence came in without knocking; all the old ceremony had gone. The very servants looked angrily and reproachfully at the old man.

"My lady wants you, sir!"

With some remaining dignity he rose, though feebly.

“Young sir, last time, you know, you took from me Marcus, my son; now I will take you back to him!”

I stayed not long in that sick room, it was too painful for us all. I rose to go.

I tried to say farewell, but I was choking. Simon was the first to recover himself. He was the prophet with a call once more.

“Bear witness, young sir! I have towards you used hospitality without grudging, and I have spoken to you as the Oracle of God. I count it not strange, concerning the fiery trial that is coming on my house, as if some strange thing were happening. As for you, you see but a little way, but you will not feed your flock for filthy lucre. No! The man of Tarsus will not lead you astray! The lady Electa, with me, saluteth you, and so doth Marcus, my son. Greet ye one another with a kiss of Charity!”

He came slowly to me and kissed me on the cheek. He felt my tears upon his lips and kissed me on the other cheek, shuddered, and sat down, pointing to Electa. I kissed her forehead. Marcus tried to raise himself and sank back — “ Kiss him, mother ! and then ” — looking at me tearfully — “ kiss me ! ” She raised my hand and kissed it. Then she put her son’s arms round my neck as I bowed over him. I suppose I left that sad room on my own feet, but I only remember finding myself in the hall. “ God bless you, sir, and reward you,” said Prudence, handing me my hat. “ You’ve brought them three together once again at last ! ”

. . . . .

Marcus died. Nothing would induce Simon to attend the funeral. When Electa declared she would see her boy in his grave, Simon moaned a protest, then assented ; then insisted

that all the house should go and leave him alone. He was obeyed. Harry Clarke came down and managed everything. When they came back to the house Simon was gone. He had been sadly shaken of late, and his speech affected, but he still took his slow and tottering walks in the grounds. There they searched for him, waited, became more and more alarmed.

Suddenly Prudence glared in at the library door.

“Mr. Clarke!”

He started up and went out to her, scared by her look of horror.

“Mr. Clarke! he’s upstairs!”

They found him lying in the old coffin—dead!

THE END.





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